



## The Psychology of Emotion in Restorative Practice – How affect script psychology explains how and why restorative practice works

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With the recent increase in political attention on matters of restorative justice this book is a timely publication which will help practitioners and academics retain a focus on 'what matters' in restorative approaches. *The Psychology of Emotion in Restorative Practice* seeks to explore the psychological theory which makes restorative approaches effective, pointing to affect script psychology (ASP) as the theory base. For those not too familiar with ASP (and this included me) the first two chapters provide a thorough introduction to the subject. Whilst it might take one or two readings to grasp the technicalities, it is well worth investing time in these first two chapters as they explain the biological functions which underpin ASP in terms of how the emotion and cognitive system functions and the foundation of 'scripts' to the development of personality. The development of ASP has been heavily influenced by two people in particular; Silvan Tomkins and Donald Nathanson, and they are frequently reference throughout the text. Understanding this theory base will provide practitioners, academics and restorative activists a secure base to work from given there will no doubt be an increased focus on 'value for money' with an increased political interest in the topic.

The book structures its ten chapters in to four parts. After examining the theory, the remainder of the book is authored by practitioners linking the theory of ASP to community and criminal justice in part two, organisational settings in part three, and education in part four. If the first two chapters are necessarily quite heavy to the novice in ASP theory, the remaining chapters I found both illuminating of the theory, and also compelling with it being difficult at times to put the book down. The experience and personal stories provided by the variety of authors really helped to understand the practical implications and applications of ASP. Indeed, I found it instantly motivating and applicable for my work as a life coach of people with complex (including criminal) behaviours. The stories related in the chapters were easily recognisable to practitioners within the probation context, and perhaps therefore unsurprisingly at times deeply sad. As will be noted from the title though, this book is not just about restorative justice, it seeks to develop a more comprehensive approach of restorative approaches. Given the depth and pace of organisational change in the probation service at this time, the third section may yet prove the most useful in that it could provide probation staff with a means of helping them in their own professional relationships and attempting to regain or retain a sense of wellbeing.

One of the core themes throughout the text is the practical use of the compass of shame as a means of understanding behaviour and responding to it effectively. The compass of shame suggests that as humans we tend to deal with the emotion of shame through withdrawal, avoidance, or attacking self or others. The practitioners use these concepts to discuss how, in their contexts, this has helped them to make sense of behaviours being demonstrated and respond in an informed and restorative manner.

When I got to chapter five, which is simply entitled 'forgiveness', I was really gripped. The chapter's author relates her own story of how her husband was murdered leaving her with two children, and how she undertook a restorative journey in which she choose to forgive the offender. For practitioners who want to reconnect with a sense of social justice at a time when the concept is so politically, and hence managerially, challenged within the risk discourse it is hard not to be moved by these words:

"I felt sick. I wanted to know that whoever killed Bob was going to be OK. I wanted to understand how my community had failed him or her, enabling such violence to be unleashed. I felt responsible." (p.121)

Moving from the emotional to the practical, the chapter also explores the difference between being restorative and the decision to forgive; a difference not frequently explored, and seldom with such personal insight.

For the probation practitioner or manager reading this book, there will be times when the theory might seem a little complex, or the application might seem irrelevant. This is infrequent, but when it does occur it is worthwhile sticking with the text as invariably you will be able to grow your perspective through the experience. In summary, if you want to be challenged towards a more restorative approach to your own practice and want a theory base upon which to ground your thinking, this will be a useful and inspiring script. If you are not interested in restorative approaches, then this book will challenge you to reconsider why and how it works. For the former the book will be a joy to read, for the latter it is perhaps a necessity.

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